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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN OFFICIALS INVITE COOPERATION IN CARTOGRAPHY

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 20, a geographic specialist with the Office of the Geographer met with officials of the State Enterprise for Caspian Sea Issues under the Ministry of Oil and Gas, and the Institute of Mapping and Cartography at the Ministry of Defense. The officials welcomed cooperation with the U.S. in the field of cartography, including training. Map production is tightly controlled. Topographic maps are produced only for the military and are considered classified. The government mapping agency currently relies on commercial providers to upgrade equipment and methods.
END SUMMARY.

HANDLING CASPIAN SEA ISSUES

¶3. (SBU) On March 20, Ryan Kelley, a geographic specialist with the Office of the Geographer, met with the Chairman of the State Enterprise for Caspian Sea Issues under the Ministry of Oil and Gas, Toyly Komekov, who is also a newly appointed Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. The young-looking (under 30) Deputy Minister spent the first 20 minutes of the meeting describing the accomplishments of President Berdimuhamedov since coming into office, and the progress in development the country has seen during this time. He then described the responsibilities of the Enterprise on Issues of the Caspian Sea: coordinating the oil and gas policy of the President, as well as broader Caspian-related trade, environmental and other issues. The Enterprise is Turkmenistan's government agency with responsibility for negotiating Caspian issues with neighboring states.

WOULD WELCOME COOPERATION ON CARTOGRAPHY

¶4. (SBU) Komekov expressed interest in cooperation with the Office of the Geographer on cartography matters in order to build and modernize the tools and expertise of those engaged in mapping activities in Turkmenistan. He said the Turkmen side would be interested in training in Turkmenistan or in the U.S. on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or other modern cartographic systems. He said the Enterprise would be pleased to receive a letter proposing such training opportunities. He repeated a Turkmen proverb, "I prefer the sister who teaches me to the one who does for me."

15. (SBU) According to Komekov, the MFA has an information center that distributes information on Turkmenistan, including maps, as a way of promoting Turkmenistan abroad. He said there is a range of maps now available in most bookshops, so that schoolchildren can acquire them. This includes administrative, political, and natural science flora/fauna maps, and a historical map of Turkmenistan's ancient sites. The Enterprise produces a few maps using specific data, but Komekov did not indicate what the maps showed or what they were used for, or what type of data was used to make them. He noted that the Ministry of Defense's Enterprise No. 5 was the center of most cartographic work in Turkmenistan.

MAP ENTERPRISE FILLS GOVERNMENT ORDERS

16. (SBU) Kelley also met with the Director of the Institute of Mapping and Cartography (Enterprise No. 5) at the Ministry of Defense, Lieutenant Colonel Mammed Mammedov. Since independence, the Institute has produced more than 30 thematic maps for different ministries and enterprises. Speaking about the types of maps the Enterprise has produced, LTC Mammedov listed the general map of Turkmenistan, general administrative map of Turkmenistan, political world map, and city plans. He admitted that although they have produced city plans for most of the big cities of Turkmenistan, only Ashgabat's city plan has been published so far and is available for purchase. The Institute has produced different thematic maps for the ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Education recently ordered a general geographic map for educational use at schools and universities. The Enterprise has also produced and prepared for publication the Ashgabat City Plan ordered by the State Committee for Tourism and Sports of Turkmenistan. The map will be available

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for purchase at bookstores and Ashgabat hotels. No topographic maps for sale since they are classified and produced only for the Ministry of Defense.

WOULD PREFER WORKING WITH U.S. PARTNERS

17. (SBU) LTC Mammedov reported that they use all modern methods for mapping and producing maps, including aero-photo data as well as satellite photo data. They now have computers and draw maps digitally. The Institute's experts and specialists have participated in GIS system training. He mentioned that he had participated in a National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) seminar in Romania, but the Institute does not have any collaborative efforts with Iran and Russia. He said, "We do not need any support. We do business ourselves. We contact companies and learn about the new equipment, technologies and techniques." He specifically mentioned that they have been experiencing difficulty in working with Russian partners as Russians are more conservative in data-sharing. They would prefer to work with U.S. partners as the U.S. is more transparent in data-exchanges. He said, "We want to work openly." However, he pointed out that U.S. software is in English, which causes a problem for them, as they do not have English-speaking personnel. Thus, they have to opt for Russian products.

18. (SBU) COMMENT. Both meetings were arranged with the heads of the organizations, which suggests that Turkmen mid-level managers are still uncomfortable meeting with foreign visitors. As a result, even working-level foreign specialists are received by high ranking officials. In its requests for cooperation in the field of cartography, the Turkmen side once again demonstrated the new tendency to invite international cooperation in areas that it considers a priority. END COMMENT.

MILES